

Readers' Response

PERCUSSIVE NOTES welcomes responses to articles, reviews, or any percussion activity. Direct all correspondence to the Editor.

DRUM MACHINES ON THE RISE

We are in the midst of a high-technology age. Unfortunately, for drummers, technology and electronics are replacing human players even more than before...

Recently, the industry has been introduced to the LINN LM-1 Drum Computer. Not your ordinary rhythm box with 'chunka-chunka' rhythms, the LINN is an entirely new breed of drum machine. The LM-1 has **real** drum sounds stored in its memory, able to be programmed by anyone by typing patterns out on a small 'keyboard'. And this machine sounds like nothing we've heard before — it sounds **good**! It seems that the machine is capable of doing anything the user programs in. The machine retails at \$4995.

Now for the worst...

I've enclosed the LINN ad which appeared in the July 4 issue of Billboard Magazine. The LINN LM-1 has already begun to replace human drummers on recordings, as witnessed by this ad. And LINN seems to be proud of it. I think that drummers everywhere have a good reason now to fear a 'rhythm box'.

Musicians with little home studios sometimes use rhythm boxes on their demo tapes and such. But, this does not really affect a drummer's true employment. However, the LINN is priced out of the market for these amateur and semi-pro song-writers and musicians. The LINN seems to be geared towards the mega-buck operations - namely big studios in the major recording centers.

I think the real killer will be in the jingle studios. Using the LINN will eliminate basic session fees, re-use fees, pension and health & welfare contributions and other fees and expenses that would all have been normally paid to a human. Thus, ad companies and producers would have a lower cost-factor for their sessions. And drummers are out of work.

The LINN brochure blatantly states, and I quote: "Imagine having a top-notch, powerful-sounding drummer on twenty-four hours a day to inspire those potential hit songs (and even play on your records)." It seems to me that they are expecting and promoting its use on records to replace real drummers...

Live performance with the LINN? You can never tell — string synths have replaced whole string sections in some applications, and I'm sure that, eventually, some group will have the 'balls' to bring a LINN drum computer on stage instead of a drummer and drum kit, thus, cutting down on transportation, salaries, lodging, and so on.

The real proof is in the LINN demo record. You really have to hear this thing to believe it. If you'd like, I'll send you a cassette copy of the demo. If you didn't know it was a machine, you'd swear it was a genuine person. Listen to the Elton John tune mentioned in the ad — no one knows the difference; and that's the sad part about it all.

What it all boils down to is, drummers have more reason than ever to worry about their livelihood. It has already started. The LINN will be found on more and more records and jingles,

unless someone steps in to call a halt on it. Some say the machine can only be programmed by a drummer, which would keep him in work, but since the LM-1 has "automatic error correction", I think the LINN can be programmed by **anyone**, no matter what his sense of timing is, as long as he has fingers to type the buttons.

I strongly urge you, and the PAS membership to write President Victor Fuentealba of the American Federation Of Musicians in NYC and express views on the use of this threatening device. And, if anyone has had a job lost because of this machine, please have them inform the AFM, as negotiations with recording companies are coming up, and this would give some firm evidence to stand on to block the use of the LINN.

Rhythm boxes were only the beginning, ... myself and other drummers around the world really have something to fear.

Regards,
Bob Saydlowski, Jr.
Pittsfield, Ma.

Editor's note: Victor Fuentealba's address is 1500 Broadway, NYC 10036. Also, I did not reproduce the ad for copyright reasons. The "drum box" is used on the tune "Nobody Wins" from Elton John's album "The Fox."

MARIMBA ENSEMBLE INFORMATION NEEDED

I am actively seeking information about marimba ensembles, both past and present, for my Doctoral research project. It is my goal to trace the history of the marimba ensemble in the United States from its inception to the present. I would like information concerning dates and locations of concerts, groups involved, compositions performed, (copies of programs), etc. Names and addresses of people involved in marimba ensemble activity would be of great importance to me. Anyone having access to photographs of marimba orchestras (of historical significance) please write and let me know. I would be most happy to pay for a copy of the print. Please send any and all information to:

David P. Eyer
PERCUSSION BUILDING
School of Music
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, LA 70803